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Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Trafficking of women and girls

Soroptimist International (SI) is a worldwide organization for women in the professions and management, with approximately 100,000 members in 119 countries and territories around the world, who are actively engaged working through service projects to advance human rights and the status of women.

Our members believe strongly that violence of any kind is an intolerable act. In particular, SI condemns the use and/or threat of all violence against women. We join the Commission on the Status of Women in expressing concern that while much new legislation has been enacted on the multiple facets of violence against women, the issues themselves have never seemed as severe. Of particular and increasing concern is trafficking of women and girls, which United Nations figures indicate generates nearly $7 billion in profits per year.

Although Governments committed themselves, in adopting the Beijing Platform for Action, to take measures to eradicate trafficking of women and girls for exploitation of many kinds, international sexual slavery is one of the world's fastest growing industries. It is a global tragedy.

The extent of that evil trade was brought to the attention of Soroptimist members again by the founder of the Miramed Institute at the Sixteenth Soroptimist Convention, held at Helsinki in July 1999. The statistics, the visual evidence and the ensuing panel debate left an indelible impression upon delegates. As a result, our International President, Jane Zimmerman, adopted for her annual 10 December human rights appeal the theme "Soroptimists stop traffic", under which Soroptimists throughout the world donated funds to support the work of UNIFEM to create an anti-trafficking centre in the "red light" district at Mumbai, India. The main functions of the centre will include training, NGO networking, data collection and analysis. It will also provide a place for trafficked women to obtain legal, health, social assistance and access to economic alternatives to prostitution. The Miramed Institute's continuing work to prevent trafficking through education and media campaigns, the development of life/job programmes and shared information and data will also receive financial assistance from SI.

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In addition to the "Soroptimists stop traffic" project, our membership will continue to assist women and girls in avoiding recruitment into the sex industry through intervention programmes, such as the daughters' education programme and the Soroptimist International AIDS mediation programme, both in Thailand, which provide education and alternative forms of employment.

Trafficking is big business, powerful and dangerous. Watchdog groups estimate that since the early 1970s some 30 million women and children have fallen victim to the traffickers of human flesh. Owing to a lack of education and suitable employment, hopelessness and discrimination, women are being coerced and deceived and are at grave risk of trafficking. In bars, massage parlours and brothels, young women are being forced into the indentured ranks of the global sex industry.

Soroptimist International urges Governments to continue to implement legislation to halt and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls. We call upon departments of state and law enforcement agencies to monitor closely the falsification of passports, visas and educational visas. We support and encourage the exchange of data and other related information designed to bring the perpetrators of trafficking to the attention of the authorities.

Soroptimist International encourages Governments to work in partnership with NGOs to:

- Exchange information and views;
- Establish community awareness programmes for adults and children to prevent trafficking and sex abuse;
- Explore ways, develop methods and implement programmes to enable potential victims to avoid and resist the lure of traffickers;
- Create effective rehabilitation programmes for rescued victims and increase their self-esteem through practical development programmes;
- Combat child sexual exploitation and paedophilia, including Internet trafficking.

Soroptimist International pledges the support of its members worldwide in the war on violence against women, particularly the trafficking of women and girls.

A culture of peace

On 1 January 2000, technology enabled our world to share a unique moment in history when people everywhere joined together in joyful celebration. We truly were a global village. In this new millennium, SI would like to add its voice and vision to a global dialogue for peace.

We individuals and organizations who hope for peace must seize the opportunity, especially during this International Year of the Culture of Peace, to reaffirm our commitment and pledge ourselves to be more proactive in its promotion.

Our members have pledged to sign the manifesto 2000 and to support its principles in their daily lives, with their families, in their work and within their communities and countries.

SI will strive to promote a culture of peace by continuing to work with Governments, other agencies and educators to promote effective methods of conflict resolution; by condemning discrimination between peoples on the grounds of race, creed or ethnic origin; and by promoting human rights education and peace teaching. Our work on behalf of women and children affected by violence in all its forms will continue to be a priority.

In partnership with the International Red Cross, we are committed to a four-year programme to alleviate the plight of civilians affected by landmines through the "Limbs for life" programme.

The 1999 Soroptimist International President's appeal, on the theme "Soroptimists stop traffic", will assist UNIFEM and the Miramed Institute in their fight to stop trafficking of women and girls.

Soroptimist International urges Governments, the United Nations and its agencies, NGOs and other appropriate bodies to work in partnership to achieve:

- Greater international goodwill and understanding;
- A just sharing of the world's resources;
- Promotion of human rights for all people.

Soroptimist International recognizes that the attainment of peace demands mutual understanding and patient negotiation, and that tolerance for others must begin early in life, beginning with the family and continuing into formal education. We ask all member

States and educators to examine, review and revise all educational materials to ensure that they do not:

- Nurture racist or national arrogance;
- Cultivate racial, cultural or religious prejudice;
- Promote racism and racial discrimination;
- Incite/glorify physical violence.

Soroptimist International believes that living in peace should be the objective of all peoples and that peace cannot be measured by an absence of conflict. We are committed to global cooperation to foster international goodwill and understanding and universal friendship and to work in worldwide partnerships developing and promoting a culture of peace.

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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men

Statement submitted by the American Association of Retired Persons, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council representing over 32 million national and international members aged 50 years and older, brings to your attention the need to recognize the status of older women as an emerging issue, particularly in view of the impact of globalization of the media on older women.

Mass media imagery now projected worldwide comes, increasingly, from fewer sources. Those sources orient their communication towards youthful consumers because they are the ones with buying power. In the scramble to sell, the old and the poor fall by the wayside. Their images do not appear on the flickering screens which now dominate mountain huts and desert tents as surely as they do urban living rooms. Yet demographically the ageing grow in numbers, live longer and are more economically impoverished than ever. Extended families no longer exist to support elders' needs. Women are significantly more numerous than men in these statistics.

That is why older women's faces and voices must be seen and heard and, more importantly, perceived as they truly are. Older women have long served as repositories of wisdom, counsellors, grandmothers, teachers of young and old, health practitioners, artists and leaders with a lifetime of experience upon which to draw. If those women's images disappear, which will be the case if current trends continue, future information will be provided exclusively by and for those who know very little about life's teaching. The mistakes of history will repeat themselves, for then history will indeed be dead.

A serious attempt to look at the reality of older women in the world and what impact the globalization of mass media has on that reality took place from 13-15 October 1999, when the United Nations, AARP and the Netherlands Platform on Older People in Europe collaborated to sponsor a symposium on that subject. World experts representing universities, the media and a wide range of professions travelled to New York to discuss the topic. The goal was to determine practical steps to improve the image of older women, creating a new appreciation of their true worth and their need to

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have access to basic human rights. Special attention was given to the areas of education, health, economy, political influence, the environment, the avoidance of violence and armed conflict, and other important themes established at the United Nations International Women's Conference at Beijing five years ago.

Five areas which require further research resulted from the three-day symposium:

(a) Explore why older women disappear from media imagery after reaching their senior years and how that situation can be rectified;

(b) Examine how local areas negotiate with global media organizations to permit programming to be shown or not shown;

(c) Research ways to use the potential power of media to serve the cause of human rights for older women, encouraging media organization to maintain and promote a sense of civic duty;

(d) Research ways to enlist the help of older women themselves to determine how their own images are to be shown and for what purpose;

(e) Create educational programmes in such a way that the world population becomes as literate visually as it will, hopefully, one day become literate verbally.

In the move towards modernization, the media either tend to distort the reality of older women's complex lives or simply fail to depict it at all. Hence, the final insult: the invisible older woman. More research is needed to investigate how such misrepresentations or the lack of any image are translated into political and economic inequalities — not only for today's older women but for women of all ages. There is an urgent need to encourage global and local media to create images that reflect the diversity of older women's lives.

We urge the Commission on the Status of Women to place the issue of older women on the agenda of the special session of the General Assembly for the five-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women as an emerging issue that requires the attention of all member States.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Zonta International, an organization of executive professionals whose objectives include to improve the legal, political, economic, education health and professional status of women, is working to support the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Zonta International has focused particular attention on the issue of violence against women. Beginning in 1995, when the Zonta International summit on violence against women increased member and media awareness of many facets of violence against women, Zonta International has expanded its commitment to the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence. Through its international project with the United States Committee for UNICEF, it is endeavouring to dramatically reduce the practice of female genital circumcision in Burkina Faso, thus furthering its commitment to the improvement of women's health and supporting women's human rights. Through the establishment of grants to Zonta clubs around the world who cooperate with local organizations that provide mediation training for children to foster the development of violence-free relationships, Zonta International is promoting gender equality, education and violence reduction.

Other Zonta International programmes have addressed the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action. Our project with the United States Committee for UNICEF for girls' education in the northern provinces of South Africa as well as Zonta International's young women in public affairs awards, which are given to encourage leadership and commitment to service, have advanced the situation of girl children. Our Amelia Earhart fellowships have provided an opportunity to hundreds of women to pursue graduate studies in aerospace and engineering, promoting education and training in math and science. Our Jane M. Klaussman awards offer advancement to women students in business.

Zonta International looks forward to working with the United Nations and other non-governmental organizations in the new millennium to provide global and local service, to promote justice and universal respect for human rights, to actualize gender equality

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for women, and to work for the advancement of understanding and peace throughout the world.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

Statement submitted by Soroptimist International and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Associated Country Women of the World, Bahá'í International Community, the International Federation for Home Economics, the International Federation of University Women, the Pan-Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, the United States Committee for the United Nations Fund for Women, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, and the World Federation for Mental Health, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council; and the Armenian Relief Society, a non-governmental organization on the Roster of the Council.

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

We, the international and national non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and members of the NGO Committee on UNIFEM, strongly endorse UNIFEM's efforts "to turn resolutions into realities". Taking as its blueprint the Beijing Platform for Action, UNIFEM continues to support the planning and implementation of strategies to develop and operationalize national gender action plans and programmes and to strengthen the capacity to monitor progress in achieving the goals and strategic objectives of the Platform for Action.

In partnership with Governments and civil society, UNIFEM has focused particular attention on:

- Strengthening women's economic capacity;
- Engendering governance and leadership;
- Promoting human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women.

The UNIFEM programme of work in over 100 countries has relied on three key strategies:

- Building synergetic partnerships through a multidisciplinary, multisectoral and multifaceted approach;
- Increasing capacity to undertake women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming initiatives, a critical element being access to gender expertise;
- Improving and increasing the knowledge base on women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming by synthesizing, disseminating

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and improving access to technical information so that partners can learn from each others' successes and failures.

In order to strengthen UNIFEM's efforts to give life to General Assembly resolutions in their programmes and initiatives, we strongly urge Member States to:

- Increase their financial support of the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women;
- Protect UNIFEM programmes that increase the economic capacity of women by ensuring that globalization and trade policies become pro-poor, pro-sustainability and pro-equality;
- Strengthen mechanisms for tracking progress on gender equality through the gathering of current and reliable statistics and data on women and girls;
- Promote UNIFEM efforts in situations of armed conflict to involve women in peace-building activities;
- Assist UNIFEM in promoting the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol;
- Support the integration of women's interests and concerns into the basic documents and procedures for the formation of the International Criminal Court;
- Utilize new communication channels and technologies to bring the grounded realities of women into direct contact with policy-making and intergovernmental processes.

We wholeheartedly endorse the important work of UNIFEM in making Governments and civil society accountable to the world's women.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men

Statement submitted by the International Federation on Ageing, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

The Fourth Global Conference on Ageing, held at Montreal, finalized a document which was the result of deliberations and input from member groups, involving more than 1,200 participants from 68 countries. Excerpts from the proceedings are set out below.

The world is facing unprecedented change. In the next 30 years, the world's population of older persons is expected to triple, with much of this increase taking place in developing countries. All societies are enriched by their older people and demographic change will increase the potential for even greater benefits.

Ageing is a natural process of life. Older persons are a valuable resource. They are the repositories of tradition, culture, knowledge and skills. These attributes are essential in maintaining intergenerational links.

The vast majority of older persons make vital contributions to their societies, families and communities as workers, caregivers, volunteers, mentors and active citizens.

There is an increase in inequities between developing and developed countries, between rural and urban environments, and within individual countries.

The United Nations and its Member States need to develop strategies with realistic goals and measurable objectives so as to ensure that the world's population ages well and that older persons' needs for a secure and productive future are met.

We note with concern that the 1991 United Nations Principles for Older Persons are still not universally recognized nor adhered to; neither has the 1982 Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing been fully implemented.

Therefore, we call upon the United Nations and its agencies to work with national Governments, non-governmental organizations and the corporate, private and voluntary sectors in addressing the urgent issues set out below.

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Issues

Many older persons throughout the world lack access to the essentials of life as the result of discrimination on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, race gender or religion, or because of employment practices and legislative barriers. Women, as the majority of the ageing population, suffer disproportionately from poverty, poor health and isolation.

Poverty and exclusion remain the greatest threats to older women worldwide. Inequalities in income and waged employment, as well as inheritance and property law, mean that older women tend to be more impoverished and dependent than older men.

Too many live in poverty, beyond the reach of even basic social well-being. Given the additional fact that women can expect to live 5-10 years longer than their male counterpart, and are also more likely to become widows, increasing consideration for the financial situation of older women must be addressed.

Older persons with disabilities face cultural and socio-economic barriers which impact on their quality of life.

Developing countries face the most rapid rate of population ageing and the greatest economic difficulties but lack the necessary financial, social and health infrastructures to address these issues.

In many parts of the world, older women suffer multiple disadvantages on the basis of gender, ranging from abandonment to failing health. Many enter old age in a poor state of health resulting from lifelong deprivation. Although women live longer than men, they are not necessarily healthier. They are more likely to suffer from osteoporosis, hypertension, cancer and cardiac arrest. Older women are at greater risk of depression (about twice that of men) because of social isolation, financial hardship, caregiving burnout and lack of control over their life situations. Female-headed households are generally more impoverished and dependent on the family and the state for health-care services, especially for the older women among them.

The devastating effects of conflict and illnesses, such as AIDS, have drastically altered the population structure of some countries, exposing older persons to greater vulnerability.

Grandmothers, who must often care for their orphaned grandchildren due to the deaths of their children from AIDS, are at risk for contracting AIDS themselves because they are uninformed of the precautions required in caring for HIV-positive grandchildren.

We reaffirm the 1982 Vienna International Action Plan on Ageing and the 1991 United Nations Principles for Older Persons (General Assembly resolution 46/91, annex). The Principles are enunciated in the following categories:

- Independence;
- Participation;
- Self-fulfilment and dignity.

The promotion of the Principles was one objective of the Secretary-General in launching and promoting the 1999 International Year of Older Persons.

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Statement submitted by the World Veterans Federation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

The World Veterans Federation wishes to bring to the attention of the Commission its position on "women in armed conflict", one of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 at Beijing. As the Commission on the Status of Women goes into session in its role as the preparatory committee for the five-year review of the Conference outcome in June 2000, we urge that it come to grips with how the international community and that Governments respond to the civilian casualties, mostly women and children, that accompany the continuing proliferation of armed conflicts around the world. Those civilian casualties represent enormous human rights tragedies which demand recognition and redress.

Founded in 1950 by war veterans and war victims to promote peace and human rights as well as the rehabilitation of those groups, WVF has over 27 million members in 77 countries on every continent. WVF has as one of its objectives to maintain international peace and security by application of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting the rights of man and fundamental freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

WVF has been a champion of human rights for all, including women. Recognizing that war and armed conflicts impact differently upon women, in 1984 WVF created a Standing Committee on Women. Since that time, the Committee has been a resource and an important arm of the Federation on behalf of the human rights of women and children who have been disastrously affected by armed conflicts.

To fulfil its mission, the WVF submitted a statement to the Commission in March 1992 which pointed out that equality of treatment of women war veterans and war victims by national Governments and international agencies is a major interest, calling the attention of the Commission to the sizeable groups of women war victims who have suffered discrimination from Governments in the benefits, health care and pensions available to them.

In its statement to the World Conference on Human Rights held at Vienna in 1993, WVF pointed out that women victims of war are among the most vulnerable populations of the world, and that their human rights are even more abridged and denied than those of other women. Reaffirmation of the universality

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of human rights is especially important to women's human rights – women's rights are an integral part of human rights and should not be defined according to a different moral norm or modified for cultural or religious reasons. It is essential to guard against efforts to excuse human rights violations against women by claiming that cultural, religious or traditional practices exempt them from respecting universal human rights norms. The drive for equality and elimination of discrimination against women goes hand in hand with the protection of their human rights.

WVF has supported the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and condemned rape occurring in armed conflicts as a weapon of war and terror, suggesting that it be considered a war crime. Again and again, WVF has reaffirmed its commitment to the human rights of women, denouncing discrimination, assault and sexual abuse. It has called attention to the tragic situation of the "comfort women", the hundreds of thousands of women who were captured by the Japanese Army and made sexual slaves, with the support of its Government, as it aggressively rampaged through Asia during World War II. WVF also welcomed the initiative by the United Nations to have the Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur on violence against women investigate this unrecognized human disaster as well as other massive human rights violations against women.

At its Sixth International Conference on Legislation, in 1994, WVF amended its guidelines to basic rights for war veterans and victims of war to respond to the needs of the steadily increasing numbers of civilian victims of war, most of whom are women and children. In its preamble, the guidelines, which are an outline of basic principles that should be adopted by Governments, state that the recommendations also take into account the changes in the nature of armed conflicts; the steadily increasing numbers of the resulting civilian victims of war, especially women and children; and the problems that persons serving in the United Nations peacekeeping forces are facing.

Again and again, WVF has passed resolutions affirming its concern about the violation of the human rights of women in armed conflict. One resolution adopted in 1997, entitled "Victims of war and human rights", expressed satisfaction that women in armed conflicts would be one of the four themes of the 1998 meeting of the Commission, and also supported the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would allow individuals and groups the right to petition, thereby enhancing the protection of the human rights of women.

A new opportunity to protect the human rights of women during wartime has emerged from the successful diplomatic conference in 1998 in Rome which set up the International Criminal Court, which was approved by 120 nations. The World Veterans Federation, which has been calling for such an international juridical body for many years, hailed that bold international initiative, which we had long sought. At its twenty-second General Assembly, at Seoul in 1997, WVF once more called for a permanent international jurisdiction to handle war crimes and other heinous crimes. WVF has requested its member associations to put pressure on their Governments to sign and ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Expressing regret at the limited geographical competence of ad hoc jurisdictions, WVF urged States to decide to create a permanent and independent international criminal court competent, in particular to try persons alleged to have committed or to have been accomplices in genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, or any other serious violation of international humanitarian law.

WVF early on joined the NGO effort to push for ratification of the Rome Statute by joining the NGO Coalition for an International Criminal Court, which represents dozens of organizations around the world. Seen as a historic landmark for humanity, the Rome Statute provides the basis for developing a just world order free from the terrible crimes that marked the twentieth century, and also gives new safeguards for women in war by defining acts of sexual abuse and rape as "crimes against humanity".

Article 7, section (g), of the Rome Statute explicitly states that rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization or any other form of sexual violence of comparative gravity are crimes against humanity — a giant step in affirming the human rights of women. In 1999, the Commission acting as preparatory committee came to grips with various suggestions for refining or changing the wording of the Rome Statute. There was an attempt by some States to limit the definition of crimes against

humanity, especially article 7 (2), so that violence against women as described would not apply when those crimes are committed within the family or if practised as a matter of religious or cultural norms.

Such proposed revisions would restrict the ability of a prosecutor to prosecute violations of women's human rights should they take place in the context of the family, and possibly in a so-called peaceful environment. Therefore, we urged that any such change should be strongly opposed. It is our contention that the Statute on this point should be left the way it was written in Rome. However, it should be made clear that any other form of sexual violence should include all sex crimes. Otherwise, the Statute would be setting up a higher standard for those crimes. The rules should also recognize harassment and discrimination as misconduct and give the Prosecutor latitude to deal with them.

It is regrettable that article 8 of the Statute on war crimes does not specify any specific definitions for rape, sexual slavery etc. Such a definition was included in the Statute for the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda. Inclusion of crimes of sexual violence under war crimes would be desirable to extend the protection of women. We would urge such an element be included as further work is done on the Statute by future preparatory bodies.

The opportunity to help fashion the details and dimensions of the Statute setting up the long-needed International Criminal Court must not be lost. Creation of that juridical body represents an unparalleled chance not only to provide redress for women victims of sexual violence during war but also to deter future crimes of this nature. As an organization dedicated to furthering the human rights of all people, WVF urges the Commission, at its forty-fourth session, to give full attention to the critical area of women in armed conflict, and to use its influence to support the above suggestions regarding the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court.

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Statement submitted by Baha'i International Community, the Christian Children's Fund, the International Council of Jewish Women, the International Federation of University Women, the League of Women Voters of the United States, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and the World Federation of Methodist Women, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and the Armenian Relief Society and the International Union for Health Education, non-governmental organization on the Roster of the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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Girls: the women of tomorrow

In 1995, girls won their place on the agenda of the Fourth World Conference on Women in chapter IV.L of the Beijing Platform for Action. Chapter IV.L makes a significant pledge to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child — specifically addressing education, violence, economic exploitation, harmful cultural attitude and practices. It promises to strengthen families, promote girls' awareness and participation in their own lives and in their societies. Its very existence acknowledges that women's advancement is not sustainable without attention to the rights of girls.

At the five-year review of the outcome of the implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women, we must recognize that many Governments have made far too little progress in turning their promises into reality. Resistance to change and lack of political will are demonstrated by inequitable resource allocation and ineffective implementation of laws and policies. In addition, the growing economic and social impact of globalization, debt burdens and free-market policies have compounded the problems of poverty and marginalization of girls.

It is important to remind ourselves that girls are not yet women. They are children with special rights and needs that must be heeded if girls of today are to become healthy, contributing women leaders of tomorrow. Girls are doubly impacted by age and gender bias and doubly disadvantaged by the negative interplay of discrimination and poverty. For example, two thirds of the 130 million children not enrolled in school are girls.

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Despite laws and a growing world consciousness, violence and exploitation of girls are rampant and often occur with impunity. Violence can do irreparable harm to girls' developing bodies, minds and emotional capacities. It leaves them without the ability to concentrate or stay in school, and denies them the self-confidence and self-respect they need to take their rightful place in the world. Among the most damning aspect of violence against girls is that in far too many places, it is still denied, unacknowledged or accepted as normal behaviour.

In situations of armed conflict, including refugee camps, girls are frequently deliberate military targets of systematic rape, abduction and murder. Infanticide, female genital mutilation, honour killings, acid throwing and a host of other heinous acts are often socially approved. The huge scope of incest and sexual abuse of young girls by family members and trusted adults is only now just beginning to be known. The often slave-like conditions of domestic work and recruitment for prostitution in many garment and carpet factories are considered normal terms of employment for girls. A lack of education leaves girls vulnerable to violence.

An increasing by-product of poverty, exploitation and violence against girls is their high vulnerability to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. UNAIDS research confirms that girls are infected at a higher rate than women and women at a higher rate than men. They must live not only with the devastating health impact but with the stigma, isolation and rejection of their families and communities. Moreover, after losing one or more family members to AIDS, many girls are forced to take on the adult role of caretaker or head of households.

How then is it possible for girls to grow into resourceful and independent women?

Girls already have demonstrated the will, energy, creativity and endurance to improve their lives. Governments must commit the will and the resources to keep their promises made at Beijing.

It is common knowledge that education is the single most effective intervention that can propel girls out of poverty and enable them to gain the skills and capacities to develop to their full potential. Governments must provide full access to all levels of quality education from early childhood through 18 years of age.

We know that girls need and have the right to a safe and supportive environment that includes nurturing and guidance from families and caring adults. Families must have social and economic support to provide for and protect their children.

Girls have shown repeatedly that their participation in decisions affecting them through youth organizations, schools, families and communities is crucial in nurturing resiliency and developing their self-esteem and leadership. Programmes designed around the principle of participation must be encouraged and implemented.

We have seen successful partnerships between NGOs and Governments provide the best insurance that girl-friendly policies and resource allocation are effectively implemented. NGOs, particularly the small, grass-roots, not-for-profit direct service agencies, are isolated and disconnected from government policies and initiatives. Governments have many resources and NGOs often have the grass-roots expertise to implement policies. We call on Governments to increase their outreach to NGOs.

Social attitudes, traditional practices and cultural values have a huge impact on the life of the girl child. Harmful attitudes are often so entrenched, hidden and persistent that they are nearly impossible to root out. Successful campaigns around issues like female genital mutilation have led to significant improvement in the life of girls in many places. Governments must make unyielding efforts to raise awareness among all sectors of society at all levels about the harmful impact of negative attitudes and behaviour on girls.

Disaggregated data by age as well as gender is essential for implementing and monitoring progress. Adequate research does not yet exist. Government practices should include gathering of data by age and gender, and Governments should seek such data from NGOs.

To fulfil the promise of the Fourth World Conference on Women to the girl child, we must all take our commitments seriously. We must value the girl child. "If tomorrow's woman is to become an equal partner with men," one African NGO has stated, "there is a great need to accord the girl child her rightful share of dignity and opportunity — today".

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

Statement submitted by the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Women and the family

The role of women in the family and the role of family in the lives of women should be given central consideration by the Committee in its deliberations on the Beijing Platform for Action. Governments should abide by the language of the Platform, which states that "the family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened" (para. 29).

As economic systems around the world have evolved, many women have chosen to seek employment outside the home. But even with increased opportunities to do so, many women have chosen not to enter the workforce but instead to focus their energies on their families. Such women, who have chosen to pursue the role of mother, deserve recognition and protection.

Women who choose not to join the economic workforce make a vast contribution to the family, particularly as mothers, which is at least as important as any economic contribution they might make. It is detrimental to the health of society to promote the view that an individual's only worth is economic.

The Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that women do not need to enter the workforce to have value in the community.

Paragraph 21 of the Platform for Action states that, "Women are key contributors to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home ...". Paragraph 29 reinforces that view by stating that, "Women make a great contribution to the welfare of the family and to the development of society, which is still not recognized or considered in its full importance".

Most women do not view motherhood as an odious stereotype. Indeed, a huge number of women aspire to that role as the most fulfilling of their lives. Most of the world's work is less satisfying and less diverse than motherhood, and women who choose to pursue it should be encouraged and supported by society.

Sadly, there are some women who encounter violence in their homes. While domestic violence is disgraceful, most marriages are not abusive. Women and men are generally safer, healthier and more prosperous in marriage than outside it.

* E/CN.6/2000/1.

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A vast majority of families are not abusive, and these realities should be reflected in policies that generally strengthen the integrity of the family and the home. Policy makers must be careful not to allow the problems that exist in some families to direct policy that will undermine strong families.

In November 1999, Wirthlin Worldwide released the results of its worldwide survey on the family. The results revealed that 78 per cent of people around the world agree that the family is the fundamental unit of society.

We encourage all Governments and intergovernmental organizations to recognize, protect and promote the family as the fundamental unit of society. We also urge Governments to give due attention to women's irreplaceable role within the family and to protect them in the uniquely feminine capacity of motherhood.

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action

Statement submitted by the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, HelpAge International, the International Council of Women, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Baha'i International Community, the Centre for Women, the Earth, the Divine, the European Women's Lobby, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the International Council of Jewish Women, the International Federation of University Women, the Italian Centre of Solidarity, Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for International and Cultural Affairs) (International Movement of Catholic Students), the Salvation Army, Socialist International Women, the Women's International Zionist Organization and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council; and the European Union of Women, the International Association for Counselling, the International Inner Wheel and the World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the Roster of the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraph 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

• • •

We the above-mentioned international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, members of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Vienna:

- Welcome the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/4 of 6 October 1999;
- Congratulate all States Parties who have signed the Optional Protocol on their speedy accession to this human rights instrument;
- Encourage Member States who have not ratified or succeeded to the Convention to do so as soon as possible so that universal ratification of the Convention can be achieved by the year 2000;
- Reaffirm our commitment to lobby Governments for support for and implementation of the aims and objectives of the Convention and its Optional Protocol;

* E/CN.6/2000/1.

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- Organize a special one-day conference on 7 April 2000 in order to brief women NGO representatives, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe, on the purpose, rights and procedures of the Optional Protocol. This will inspire them to call on their respective Governments to sign and ratify the Convention and effectively enable them to make use of this human rights instrument.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

Statement submitted by the International Council of Women, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America and Soroptimist International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, the Miramed Institute, Pax Christi International Catholic Peace Movement, the Temple of Understanding, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and the World Federation for Mental Health, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

• • •

Statement on sex trafficking and prostitution

The above-mentioned non-governmental organizations,

Reaffirming the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women,

Reaffirming the 1926 Slavery Convention and the 1958 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery,

Recalling that prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purposes of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community, as stated in the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Others, along with a commitment to punish any person who procures, entices, or leads away, for the purposes of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person,

Reaffirming the recognition of the widespread and varied forms of violence against women stated in the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women as well as the concern for the mental and physical well-being of women and the need for programmes to educate and empower women in all areas of life,

*E/CN.6/2000/1.

00-24963 (E) 280100

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 52/98 on traffic in women and girls and the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/53/409),

Reaffirming the commitment to mental health made at the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women,

Alarmed that women have been disproportionately marginalized by the structural adjustment programmes of the last decade, petty and high-level corruption of government officials, the rise of organized crime and the increase in regional and local warfare and natural disasters,

Alarmed by the spread of HIV/AIDS worldwide,

Deeply concerned that prostitution and trafficking are integral parts of a rapidly expanding global sex industry which is taking new and pernicious forms, including sex tourism, mail order bride trade, pornography and the use of the Internet for purposes of sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons,

Convinced by the experience of survivors and research that sex trafficking, prostitution and related forms of sexual exploitation constitute severe forms of violence and sex discrimination mediated by persistent prejudicial social attitudes against racially, ethnically and economically marginalized groups, as well as against persons with physical or mental disability,

Recognizing that the majority of commercially sexually exploited persons are children, adolescents and women with young children,

Disturbed that the violent and discriminatory nature of prostitution and trafficking is masked by terms which equate it with a moral failure by the victim or which dignify it as a form of labour,

Disturbed that prostitution and trafficking are under-researched problems due to lack of political will, by definitions of violence unreflective of women's actual experiences, and by law enforcement and immigration policies which treat sexually exploited or trafficked persons as criminals and which allow pimps, procurers, traffickers and customers to victimize millions of women and children each year with impunity,

Urge the Committee on the Status of Women and the United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality to make sex trafficking, prostitution and all levels of the global sex industry a priority issue in their follow-ups to the Fourth World Conference on Women;

Urge United Nations treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Committee, to ensure that States Parties monitor and report on the extent and incidence of commercial sex exploitation as well as on the violence accompanying them, so that by the year 2010, 90 per cent of country reports contain thorough research and documentation;

Urge United Nations agencies, especially UNIFEM, UNAIDS, UNDP, INSTRAW and the ILO, as well as States parties to relevant treaties and non-governmental organizations, to refrain from language which dignifies prostitution as a form of labour or legitimately chosen condition, so that all United Nations documents use appropriate language by the year 2002 and 95 per cent of the legislative and policy-making documents of States parties reflect appropriate terminology by the year 2005;

Urge United Nations agencies and States parties to reject development policies which intensify the marginalization of women and children or which place them at risk of sexual exploitation, substance abuse or sexually transmitted diseases, and in cooperation with NGOs to develop community-based prevention programmes, in particular targeting children, adolescents and women with young children, that identify the risks of commercial sexual exploitation and offer alternative livelihood projects;

Urge United Nations agencies, States parties and non-governmental organizations to develop and implement programmes for victims of the sex industry, irrespective of their civil or immigration status, and that include, without charge, shelter, confidential health care, including treatment for HIV/AIDS, psychological rehabilitation, legal services and alternative livelihood projects;

Call upon Governments to decriminalize the act or condition of being sexually exploited, and to criminalize the acts of pimping, procuring, sex trafficking and purchasing of sex, regardless of the consent given by the sexually exploited, and to facilitate the enforcement of such laws by instituting appropriate witness protection and asylum programmes for victims, and in cooperation with NGOs to develop and implement programmes to educate law

enforcement, medical and social work personnel about the nature and effects of commercial sexual exploitation;

Urge all Governments to ratify the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, so that the Convention achieves 100 per cent ratification by the year 2005.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Statement submitted by Rotary International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Rotary International, as an international association of 29,700 clubs located in over 160 countries, encourages its member clubs to develop projects to address the needs of both men and women in their communities equally. Rotary clubs around the world frequently gather volunteers and resources to develop and implement projects in collaboration with local governmental and non-governmental organizations.

As proposed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), many Rotary clubs have implemented projects that address one or more of the critical health needs listed in the Platform for Action, chapter IV.C, paragraphs 89-105, particularly those which improve access to basic health care (see Strategic objective C.1) and develop preventive programmes that promote women's health (see Strategic objective C.2).

The projects range from the simple provision of medicine, medical supplies or personnel to developing a complete health-care infrastructure with facilities to help meet the needs of an entire community. Each project is determined by the local Rotary club, which operates autonomously but with the guidance and support of Rotary International.

Local business and professional leaders comprise the vast network of 1.2 million volunteer Rotary club members, which is considered to be one of Rotary's most important resources. The volunteers, building foundations for strong local connections, enable Rotary to stay attuned to the needs, culture and customs of the global community. Through the worldwide network of Rotary volunteers who share the same ideals of "Service above self", it is possible for a Rotary club in one area of the world to find the technical, administrative or financial expertise needed to develop a specific type of project for its community.

In 1995, Rotary clubs in Germany and Nigeria worked together to develop solutions to a population growth dilemma in Nigeria. Club members developed child-spacing and family health investigation centres at Lere and Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria, to educate families about the benefits of spacing childbirth. In developing the project concept, organizers were keenly aware of the importance of gaining the support and

* E/CN.6/2000/1.

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acceptance of the men in the communities in that male-oriented culture. Without the consent and approval of the husbands, organizers assert, many women would have been unable or reluctant to learn about the concepts and benefits of child-spacing. Working with the local community (male) leaders, they developed a campaign to educate families about the benefits and necessity for child-spacing as a reproductive health issue.

Child-spacing allows time for the mother's body to heal and recover from childbirth, thereby greatly reducing the rate of maternal and infant mortality. Today, prepared with information and choices about women's health issues, men and women are making decisions together which affect the size and health of their families.

The centres were created in response to alarming statistics released by UNFPA. Nigeria's population, which exceeded 120 million, was expected to double by the year 2022 and multiply sevenfold within 75 years. With a fertility rate averaging 6.1 births per woman, it was not uncommon to find families with more than 12 children. But the most disturbing statistics showed that maternal and infant mortality significantly exceeded world norms.

Supported by grants from the Rotary Foundation and the German Government, the child-spacing and family health investigation centres supplemented conventional reproductive health-care services, which were previously provided mainly by midwives. To further educate birth attendants, nurses, doctors and other village health workers, workshops were conducted with the support of an additional Rotary Foundation matching grant. The health-care providers learned how to screen for reproductive tract cancer and disseminate information on available child-spacing methods. Following the workshop, knowledge on topics improved from 70 to 91 per cent among the more than 1,000 doctors, nurses, health-care workers, traditional birth attendants and town criers who participated.

Since 1995, participation in the centres' programmes has multiplied 10 to 15 times over, helping more than 1,300 women. As a result of the project, organizers report that child-spacing and women's health issues are no longer "concealed" topics in the cities concerned but practical matters. In addition, they have noted a significant increase in the contraceptive prevalence rate of women of child-bearing age in the two cities — from 3 to 12 per cent at Zaria and 3 to 15 per cent at Lere.

Another key factor which has helped ensure the success and acceptance of the project was the ability of local Rotarians to work closely with civic and religious community leaders to mount the massive public awareness campaign. Midwives trained in child-spacing counselling conducted drama groups to educate and inform women in their communities. Town criers conveyed important messages and information at all public ceremonies and important occasions. The predominantly male town criers played an integral role in convincing and educating men who are heads of households and more often than not — the family decision makers.

The following excerpt from a statement adopted in 1999 by the Board of Directors on behalf of the organization's 29,700 clubs provides further evidence of the gravity with which Rotary International views the issue of health-care provision within the framework of local customs:

> Rotary International encourages Rotary clubs and districts, working, as appropriate, with government agencies, non-governmental organizations and local leadership, to increase awareness and undertake even more projects that promote education on the issue of population, access to family health care and adequate nutrition, and that enable individuals, both men and women, to make informed and responsible decisions about such issues as child-spacing in a way that is in keeping with their personal values and cultural and religious considerations.

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Statement submitted by World Young Women's Christian Association, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Importance of including issues affecting older women in United Nations agendas

It is the view of the World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA) that the situation of older women is absolutely relevant to the agenda of conferences and conventions dealing with women's issues and should be integrated in any recommendation or statement.

The status of older women has long been of concern to the World YWCA. For example, as long ago as 1959 the World YWCA Council, meeting at Cuernavaca, Mexico, called for its member associations to strive to influence public opinion and employers and help to eliminate discriminatory practices in relation to the placement and employment of older women. Unfortunately, even today, older women face discriminatory practices in the workplace. The World YWCA urged that the problems of promotion possibilities, reassignment, age limits and pensions be given careful consideration [illegible] that YWCAs provide adequate vocational guidance and training services.

National YWCAs from countries with [illegible] differing economic situations continue [illegible] programmes for their rapidly growing population of older people. They include affordable, sunrise housing and residential care, indispensable preventive community support, rehabilitative services, household assistance, recreational activities, health care, spiritual and social activities. Among member associations involved are the YWCAs of Hong Kong, China; Malaysia; Poland; Singapore; Taiwan, Province of China; the United States of America; Canada; and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

YWCAs in Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Egypt have developed badly needed programmes in refugee camps, where many older women have been adversely affected by the ravages of war and the loss of family members, homes and financial support.

The World YWCA would like to point out that in many developing countries the notion of retirement simply doesn't exist. In those countries, many women have never had a permanent job and are forced to develop their own strategies merely to survive.

* E/CN.6/2000/1.

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Another factor in the lives of many older women is the importance of maintaining strong family support systems, which in many parts of the world have historically provided the main resource on which the older person may depend.

As the world passes into the new millennium, we are faced with the double-edged sword of a projected population that will consist, in many countries, of 33 per cent older people and 50 per cent young people. So, we are going to be left with very young and very old and relatively few people in the middle who are the ones, the caregivers, who normally support the other two. Although YWCA programmes are generally focused on the young, who are the leaders of the future, we believe it is time to respect and address the needs of the older women in our society and to recognize and acknowledge the value of their wisdom and the life experiences that they contribute to the home, the workplace and the community. The women's organizations in the United Nations/NGO community, who are eminently suited to take on this task, have an incentive provided by the Fourth World Conference on Women to do so.

The World Young Women's Christian Association would like to express its appreciation for the opportunity to present this statement.

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Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and Project Concern International and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Pregnancy and young adolescents

We, the above-mentioned non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, urge Governments to provide more appropriate education and information resources about sexual and reproductive health for young women, and more appropriate support and services for pregnant adolescents.

Adolescent childbirth is a global issue. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has established that at least half of all young people will have sex by the age of 16 and most will have had sex by the age of 20. Ten per cent of world births are to teenage mothers. And yet young pregnant adolescents are at risk or are disadvantaged in a number of ways that have been acknowledged and highlighted by the United Nations.

Young pregnant teenagers are more likely to experience health problems at childbirth that affect both mother and child; they are less likely to complete their education and they are less likely to be employed.

In most cases, young adolescents become pregnant because of lack of information, advice and preventative measures. Appropriate and adequate education and support would help to prevent young adolescent girls becoming pregnant. We urge all Governments to ensure that girls and young women are provided with appropriate advice, support and health services.

Even where available, contraceptive devices are often not used correctly, if at all. Teenage marriages are still common in many developing countries, with many girls marrying under the age of 15. Young married women are more likely to have children in quick succession and to start having children at a younger age. Cultural and traditional practices in many societies lead to early childbirth.

Appropriate reproductive and sexual health education and services are vital if girls and young women are going to develop their full potential and have the same opportunities and choices as boys and young men.

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Health risks

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that the safest age for pregnancy is 20 to 24 years old. Early pregnancies can endanger young adolescents' health. Adolescents, particularly younger teenagers, are at risk because skeletal growth is incomplete in many women until the age of 18, while the birth canal may not mature until they reach 20 to 21 years. Deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth are two to five times higher among women under 18 than among those aged 20 to 29.

Unprotected sex not only leads to the possibility of pregnancy but also leads to the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted diseases or HIV.

Many teenage pregnancies are unwanted and there are 4.4 million abortions every year among adolescents, some of which are unsafe or illegal.

In many societies around the world, sexual assault is prevalent, with more and more young girls being abducted, raped and trafficked.

These are all facts which should be conveyed to young people from an early age.

Beijing critical areas of concern

The Beijing Platform for Action highlights a number of issues that affect the sexual development and activities of adolescents, which if addressed by Governments would ensure that adolescents make informed choices about their sexual activities.

Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training

In all societies, women with the least education start sexual relationships earlier than women with more schooling. In all countries, women with less than primary education are at least twice as likely to marry under the age of 20 than women with more schooling.

Education empowers young women to become decision makers and to make informed choices about their lives. Education programmes teach young people about the possible repercussions of their sexual activities. As future mothers themselves, young women are educators of the next generation. It is therefore even more important that young women are given an appropriate and sufficient education.

Sex education does not promote sexual promiscuity but provides correct information so that young people can make informed decisions. The option of abstinence from sexual relations until marriage can and should form part of sex education.

When adolescents become pregnant, they more often than not do not complete their education either because it is impractical or because their school excludes them.

Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services

There are still insufficient youth-friendly health services, particularly for adolescent females seeking advice about sexual and reproductive health. Teenage mothers often do not receive appropriate or adequate health care.

Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels

The sexual activities of women are determined by men in many societies. Men often dominate a relationship sexually and emotionally. Young women are restricted in their activities and often receive less education. Young girls are encouraged to marry early even in communities where it is forbidden by law.

There are a disturbing number of teenage pregnancies resulting from sexual assault and forced sexual intercourse.

Non-governmental organizations and Governments need to ensure that the needs of girls and young women are identified by girls and young women themselves, and that their needs are addressed.

Actions

We recommend that Governments and non-governmental organizations:

- Support non-formal education for young people that provides programmes and support for the social, personal and sexual development of girls and young women;
- Provide youth-friendly health services for girls and young women;
- Make it illegal to exclude pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers from school;

- Provide suitable and sufficient education programmes in schools on sexual and reproductive health;
- Promote gender equality through all educational programmes, especially through sexual and reproductive health education programmes.

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Statement submitted by the American Association of Retired Persons, the International Council of Women, the International Federation on Ageing and Soroptimist International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Project Concern International and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council; and the International Women's Tribune Centre, a non-governmental organization on the Roster of the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Women and decision-making

The above-mentioned non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council advocate that women and men be given equal opportunities to share power and decision-making.

Equality is a human right. Article 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women states that 'parties should take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Women earn less than 10 per cent of the world's income. They constitute 80 per cent of the world's poor. Only 6 per cent of government ministers are women, and women hold less than 14 per cent of the world's leading positions.

In most parts of the world, men are the key decision makers in the family, in society, in politics and in business. Inequality in the sharing of power and decision-making starts from childhood and continues throughout the lifespan. Two thirds of the world's illiterate are women, and 70 per cent of the 130 million children with no opportunity to go to school are girls.

Lack of education for girls has a double impact on gender inequality. Girls and young women who are not adequately educated are not given the tools for gender empowerment, and boys and young men who are better educated are able to exercise their power to the detriment of young women.

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Financial power is often synonymous with social and political power, and since so many women in the world are financially dependent on men they become dependent on them in every other way. Often when women do exercise their equal rights they are stigmatized by society as behaving "unwomanly". There is a fundamental and worldwide attitude towards women as inferior subordinates.

In parts of the world where girls are needed for household chores, youth organizations offer non-formal education, training and experiential learning outside school hours and when the girls are not needed for household chores.

Governments are urged to make a commitment to gender equality not only by giving women positions of leadership and power but also by ensuring that equal opportunities are available for girls and boys from birth upwards. Women will only become decision makers and leaders if there is a fundamental change in cultural attitudes towards them. Boys must be taught that girls are equal from an early age, and girls must be given opportunities to gain leadership skills throughout school and beyond.

Girls and young women should be provided with opportunities for self-training in the development of character, responsible citizenship and service in their own and world communities, and in order to achieve this young women must be involved at all levels of decision-making.

We urge Governments to:

- Ensure that girls are given equal access to primary and secondary education as boys;
- Actively support youth organizations which promote and train girls and young women as leaders and decision makers;
- Actively support youth organizations which teach boys and young men that they enjoy an equal partnership with girls and young women;
- Ensure that equal opportunities policies are put in place in all areas of employment and government;
- Legislate against gender discrimination in positions of power;
- Ensure the correct demographic proportion of women in positions of power and decision-making;
- Provide appropriate support for working mothers;
- Promote successful women leaders as examples for future generations of women.